Network Engineering Services RFP
Pre-Bid Conference

Questions Submitted Prior to Conference

1. Question: What documentation exists today on the current network environment? (Schematics, assets lists, etc)
   Answer: ISD has data base information for locations of voice, data, and video circuits. There are also specific graphics of major facilities between metropolitan areas, and graphics of connection between campus buildings in Montgomery. This information will be made available to the awarded bidders who sign a non-disclosure, single use policy.

2. Question: How many locations and devices are in service today? How many in the future?
   Answer: There are about 1200 Frame Relay sites, 110 video sites, and 1,100 voice sites. These voice nodes represent 46,000 voice devices. Growth is projected at 10% per year.

3. Question: When was the last time, if any, that a network performance analysis was performed?
   Answer: We have not done any overall network performance analysis. This will be a part of this project.

4. Question: Are there any vendor standards in place for network equipment?
   Answer: While there are not any specific vendor standards, the state has an investment in Nortel Voice Nodes, and Cisco routing and switching.

5. Question: Are there any plans for integration of broadcast quality video capabilities for this network?
   Answer: If the question is referring to full motion video, no.

6. Question: Are there plans to integrate any radio communications onto the IP based network for first responders/law enforcement?
   Answer: There are no formal plans.

7. Question: The RFP does not mention anything about disaster recovery plans for network communications. Should this be included?
   Answer: Yes

8. Question: If chosen for this award, it is assumed that the State of Alabama will provide the contract winner with the current costs of operation of data network, the current bandwidth spend, all current PVC's, current voice spend and the most recent and up-to-date network costs for transport and support for preparation of a cost of ownership model. Is this assumption correct?
   Answer: Yes

9. Question: What network maps are available?
   Answer: ISD has data base information for locations of voice, data, and video circuits. There are also specific graphics of major facilities between metropolitan areas, and graphics of connection between campus buildings in Montgomery. This information will be made available to the awarded bidders who sign a non-disclosure, single use policy.

10. Question: What is the extent of the current networks throughout the State of Alabama?
    Answer: They exist in every county.

11. Question: What locations and equipment types are part of the networks?
    Answer: ISD has data base information for locations of voice, data, and video circuits. There are also specific graphics of major facilities between metropolitan areas, and graphics of connection between campus buildings in Montgomery. This information will be made available to the awarded bidders who sign a non-disclosure, single use policy.

12. Question: What data is available regarding the structure of existing networks and in machine readable formats?
    Answer: ISD has data base information for locations of voice, data, and video circuits. There are also specific graphics of major facilities between metropolitan areas, and graphics of connection between campus buildings in Montgomery. This information will be made available to the awarded bidders who sign a non-disclosure, single use policy.

13. Question: Will the State provide a list of existing network locations and the equipment being utilized for voice, video and data?
    Answer: ISD has data base information for locations of voice, data, and video circuits. There are also specific graphics of major facilities between metropolitan areas, and graphics of connection between campus buildings in Montgomery. This information will be made available to the awarded bidders who sign a non-disclosure, single use policy.

14. Question: What impact and consideration do the State's networks have regarding the different counties and municipalities on driver's licenses, car tags, health services and other state functions or services?
    Answer: The STATE's network provides services to all counties on behalf of state agencies.

15. Question: How are the current vendors' bills received by the STATE, i.e. machine readable format or paper?
    Answer: Both

16. Question: How many paper and machine readable bills are received each month?
    Answer: Approximately 100 bill per month.

17. Question: To what extent does the State plan to replace its existing telecommunications equipment (CPE) and where?
    Answer: The STATE does not currently plan to replace any existing equipment. However, the STATE will enhance or compliment the existing infrastructure as agreed upon by the successful vendor.

18. Question: What process documentation is currently available (disaster recovery plan, other *items)?*
    Answer: None

19. Question: What organizational charts will be available?
    Answer: The STATE will release that information post award.

20. Question: How many control centers are involved?
    Answer: The STATE is not sure what the bidder is asking.

21. Question: How many Implementation teams and Maintenance teams are involved?
    Answer: There exist several different teams in our organization: Network Engineering, Router and Switch Services, Separate Network and Voice Control Centers, Voice Customer Consulting (5), Voice Switch Network Team (7).

22. Question: What is our responsibility for installing a probe on the network or will the State provide the data?
    Answer: It will be the responsibility of the vendor to provide the probe and collect data.

23. Question: What restrictions does the State have regarding installing a probe to measure the WAN traffic?
    Answer: The installation has to be coordinated through the office of network operations.

24. Question: Where could a probe be attached for discovery purposes?
    Answer: The probe will be attached to the network in a defined point in Montgomery.

25. Question: What software is currently being utilized for network management?
    Answer: For the Data Network, the Harris Network Management Platform, MRTG; for the Voice Network, the Nortel MAT System and the Centry Monitoring Software.

26. Question: What are the State's requirements for networking diagrams (i.e. AutoCAD)?
    Answer: The STATE requires a Visio editable version.

27. Question: How does the State define "network circuit capabilities"?
    Answer: This is defined as but not limited to the current usage of the circuit and the potential usage.

28. Question: In what context is the term "alternatives" used?
    Answer: Alternatives is defined as but not limited to alternatives to lease lines.

29. Question: Who is the current network provider(s)?
    Answer: BellSouth

30. Question: Does the State anticipate utilizing a Request for Information to acquire pertinent information and narrowing the playing field?
    Answer: That decision will be made as a result of this project.

31. Question: What qualifications would a potential network provider need to possess in order to be considered? (i.e. State-wide services, 7x24 operation center, years in business).
    Answer: That decision will be made as a result of this project.

32. Question: What process is currently employed for cost recovery?
    Answer: The STATE currently uses the services of DMG-Maximus to establish our cost model.

33. Question: How many presentations will be required?
    Answer: Two major presentations

34. Question: Are there any different requirements for "a Project Plan detailing the cost, performance and schedules for each component of the proposed solution" than what is normally included in "a Microsoft Project file" and, if yes, what are they?
    Answer: No

35. Question: When will the STATE expect a draft RFP to solicit proposals for the Implementation Process?
    Answer: Undetermined at this time

36. Question: When will the STATE expect a Project Management proposal for implementing the recommended and approved solution?
    Answer: At the end of the project

37. Question: When should the draft RFP/Project Plan be submitted, after the Recommendations are reviewed and accepted by the State?
    Answer: At the end of the project

38. Question: What will the draft RFP/Project Plan include, equipment terminating the network or be limited to the network (carrier) services?
    Answer: This will primarily focus on the network services.

39. Question: Will the STATE provide a copy of the proposed "written contractual and agreement with the Department of Finance Information Services Division."
    Answer: The State does not have a standard contract as this time.

40. Question: To better help us estimate the effort required, please provide us with a high-level qualitative and quantitative assessment of the information currently available for the current statewide network(s):
   · Network protocols (link level and network level)
   · Network topologies
   · Contracted bandwidth (access, port, PVC)
   · Locations: data center(s), secondary networking sites, end-user locations
   · Inventory of networking devices (routers and switches): make, model, installation date, owned/leased

   Answer: ISD has data base information for locations of voice, data, and video circuits. There are also specific graphics of major facilities between metropolitan areas, and graphics of connection between campus buildings in Montgomery. This information will be made available to the awarded bidders who sign a non-disclosure, single use policy.

41. Question: Are current network costs known and available from a central location? Would we need to survey all State departments and agencies to determine the cost baseline?
   Answer: Yes, they are known, but will not be provided at this time. The vendor will not need to survey state departments.

42. Question: Are workloads (ex.: link utilization) and traffic patterns known?
   Answer: No

43. Question: Are current network support processes documented?
   Answer: No

44. Question: Are there current performance SLAs in place for the network(s) (ex.: latency, availability, MTTR)?
   Answer: The STATE has SLA's in place with the incumbent network vendor.

45. Question: Is documentation available to illustrate the current network support organizations, specifically staffing levels, roles and responsibilities, skills inventory?
   Answer: It is available, but will not be provided at this time.

46. Question: Will existing Network Service Provider and equipment maintenance contracts be available for review?
   Answer: It is available, but will not be provided at this time.

47. Question: Is it mandatory that proposals include project management services for solution implementation?
   Answer: That is the desire of the STATE.

48. Question: Does the State anticipate full-time, on-site project management?
   Answer: Yes

49. Question: Given the breadth of the work being requested, even a general budget range would be very helpful in enabling our firm to develop a Statement of Work. Can you provide any information on the budget expectations for this project?
Answer: No budget amount has been established at time.

50. Question: How many remote sites will be analysed for the network assessment?
Answer: There are about 1200 remote Frame Relay sites, 110 remote video sites, and 1,100 remote voice sites. These voice nodes represent 12,000 voice devices on campus and 34,000 voice devices off campus. Growth is projected at 10% per year.

51. Question: Do you have topology diagrams of the LAN and WAN segments of your network?
Answer: ISD has data base information for locations of voice, data, and video circuits. There are also specific graphics of major facilities between metropolitan areas, and graphics of connection between campus buildings in Montgomery. This information will be made available to the awarded bidders who sign a non-disclosure, single use policy.

52. Question: What are the manufacturers and models of all LAN and WAN equipment? (e.g. routers, switches, hubs)
Answer: Predominantly Cisco

53. Question: How many current WAN and Internet providers do you utilize?
Answer: One

54. Question: Is your current wiring plant documented?
Answer: Yes

55. Question: What types of networking technology are being used throughout the environment?
Answer: Voice TDM
Video TDM and IP (H.320 and H.323)
Data Campus Gigabit Ethernet
Data State-wide Frame Relay

56. Question: What are the lengths of the contracts for the current WAN links?
Answer: The State is near the beginning of the third year of a three year contract with the option to renew two additional one-year periods.

57. Question: What type of equipment is used in the Voice Network currently?
Answer: Predominately Nortel

58. Question: What is the bidding process for the WAN contracts within the State of Alabama network?
Answer: Competitive Bid Process

59. Question: Does the State of Alabama have a disaster recovery plan?
Answer: No

60. Question: At what level of redundancy does the State expect the WAN and Voice network to have in new design?
Answer: The STATE expects to provide the maximum amount of redundancy that is available and affordable.

61. Question: Specifically for Section 5, are there any limitations for the selected vendors to provide network engineering, deployment and other post-equipment sales services?
Answer: Yes

62. Question: Are there SLA's for the network and who are they with?
Answer: Incumbent Vendor

63. Question: Can the state provide a detailed description/list of the current equipment (voice, data, video) installed and the location where it is installed? If not a full list at least some partial information? What can be provided as a starting point?
Answer: ISD has data base information for locations of voice, data, and video circuits. There are also specific graphics of major facilities between metropolitan areas, and graphics of connection between campus buildings in Montgomery. This information will be made available to the awarded bidders who sign a non-disclosure, single use policy.

64. Question: Can the state provide some high level descriptive information about their network including protocols and that shows major hubs?
Answer: Answer: ISD has data base information for locations of voice, data, and video circuits. There are also specific graphics of major facilities between metropolitan areas, and graphics of connection between campus buildings in Montgomery. This information will be made available to the awarded bidders who signs a non-disclosure, single use policy.

65. Question: What standards have the State of Alabama established relative to the Data/Voice/Video networks if any? Are there any long term agreements the state has with various network vendors (HW, SW, Services) that need to be considered/respected/included in this response?
Answer: While there are not any specific vendor standards, the state has an investment in Nortel Voice Nodes, and Cisco routing and switching.

66. Question: What current network monitoring tools and reports are currently in use or produced by the State of Alabama?
Answer: Harris Network Management, MRTG

67. Question: What are the application requirements for the current and future networks?
Answer: This is a statewide network used by all state agencies to support their missions and all assorted applications.

68. Question: Can the State of Alabama describe how the Data/Voice/Video networks currently in place are managed today (are they all managed by a common group or are these separately managed)?

Answer: Voice and data are managed separately.

69. Question: Section Five of the RFP states that: "The selected Vendor will not be able to provide and operational services identified in this contract and necessary to implement the STATE's new network infrastructure for a period of four (4) years from the beginning of this contract. The selected Vendor will not be precluded from performing an implementation oversight or advisory role, but it is the intent of the STATE to obtain these services, if any, via a subsequent competitive procurement."

    This requirement would disqualify competent integrators with extensive capabilities in networking technologies from many manufacturers from participating in this procurement and the subsequent implementation. We request that the state change this requirement so the participation in the project does not preclude participation in the implementation. We do believe, however that you state in this procurement that the implementation services would be competed by RFP in a full and open competition.
    Answer: a. The STATE is not willing to change the specification concerning how the implementation would be accomplished. b. Although there will be a competitive process, the selected Vendor for this project will be precluded from participation.

70. Question: Is there an incumbent for network engineering services, and if so is this vendor eligible to participate in this procurement?
    Answer: No

71. Question: Will the state consider a prime/subcontractor team that provides the critical skills and past performance experience?
    Answer: Yes

72. Question: What is the State's timeframe or schedule for completing the 17 tasks listed in the RFP?
    Answer: Less than two years

73. Question: The amount of time required to accomplish the services requested in this RFP could range from a few months to well over a year. The costs and allocation of resources would vary considerably based on the time constraints. In order for all vendor responses to be based on the same requirements, please provide your timeframe for all services to be completed.
    Answer: Less than two years

74. Question: Are there any materials potential bidders could use to make a better determination of the project scope? For example, out of date diagrams, cost analysis, or bandwidth utilization data? Will such materials be available at the bidders' conference or even before, permitting vendors to develop better questions for the bidders' conference?
    Answer: ISD has data base information for locations of voice, data, and video circuits. There are also specific graphics of major facilities between metropolitan areas, and graphics of connection between campus buildings in Montgomery. This information will be made available to the awarded bidders who sign a non-disclosure, single use policy.

75. Question: Will the state permit a potential bidder to interview staff and review materials to attempt to evaluate the scope of work?
Answer: Not at this time

76. Question: What timeline is expected from inception to deliverables?
Answer: Less than two years

77. Question: How much money is budgeted for this engagement?
Answer: No budget has been established at this time.

78. Question: Is this engagement across all state agencies for is this limited to the ISD Network specifically? (i.e., where the responsibility of ISD ends and begins in terms of the infrastructure)
Answer: It is for the ISD network, but ISD provides network services to all state agencies.

79. Question: If all agencies are included, will a clearer understanding of the existing infrastructure by department be provided prior to the December 16th deadline for RFP's?
Answer: N/A

80. Question: Have any RFP addenda been issued as of this date?
Answer: No

81. Question: Will the state provide an electronic version of the RFP in MS Word or Corel WordPerfect to facilitate more accurate responses by the bidders?
Answer: The State will provide a PDF file or TXT file format.

82. Question: What is the consulting budget for this project, and has this project been funded?
Answer: The project is funded at this time; however the amount is not yet specified.

83. Question: What is the planned decision date? When does the state plan to conduct contract negotiations and execute the contract?
Answer: The State plans to make a decision by February 1st, 2005.

84. Question: What is the project's planned start date and completion date?
Answer: Estimated start date the first of May, 2005 with a maximum completion time of twelve (12) months.

85. Question: Please briefly describe the current networks: number of users, number of termination points, current bandwidth, services provided, envisioned growth, etc.
Answer: ISD has data base information for locations of voice, data, and video circuits. There are also specific graphics of major facilities between metropolitan areas, and graphics of connection between campus buildings in Montgomery. This information will be made available to the awarded bidders who sign a non-disclosure, single use policy.

86. Question: Is there any other information or are there any other reports and/or previous studies that the state has and can make available relative to the planned project that would expedite the consultant's ability to provide "on-the-mark" proposal/bid?
Answer: There are no previous studies of this nature.

87. Question: What evaluation criteria and weighting factors will the State use to evaluate the proposals?
Answer: Best value for the State of Alabama

88. Question: Does the state prefer the use of local businesses? Minority firms? Are these firms awarded additional points during the evaluation process and if so, how many?
Answer: No

89. Question: RFP paragraph 11 on RFP page 4 – Can the winning vendor obtain the Certificate of Authority after the contract has been awarded or must it be obtained before the proposal has been submitted?
Answer: Yes, after the vendor selection, but prior to final contract award. Certificate of Award must be obtained in a time suitable to the State or the State reserves the right to negotiate with another vendor.

90. Question: RFP paragraph 15 on RFP page 5 – Will the state provide a list of the firms who attended the pre-bid conference?
Answer: Yes, the attendees will be posted on the website.

91. Question: RFP paragraph 15 on RFP page 5 – Will the state provide meeting notes as well as questions, answers, and clarifications from the pre-proposal conference?
Answer: Yes

92. Question: Please offer a better explanation of the existing network as to the locations covered. Are they mostly in one city or throughout the state? What percentage of buildings to be served in a single city?
Answer: ISD has data base information for locations of voice, data, and video circuits. There are also specific graphics of major facilities between metropolitan areas, and graphics of connection between campus buildings in Montgomery. This information will be made available to the awarded bidders who sign a non-disclosure, single use policy.

93. Question: Are there protocols other that IP on the network to be supported?
Answer: Yes, SNA, TDM, and H.320 video; in the future SIP.

94. Question: Is the consultant expected to survey all Governmental units to determine their individual needs, or will this information be made available through some other previously collected means such as a survey or from existing records?
Answer: The State may ask the bidder to meet with different communities of interest as directed by the State, i.e. law enforcement, health and human services, etc.

95. Question: Is there a central network operations center supporting the "state" network today, or are there multiple data centers? If multiple, how many and are they all located in the same city?

Answer: In response to one operations support center, the State has a Network Operations Center that monitors the State's resources on a 24X365 basis. There are also multiple mainframe resources in the state. There are four mainframe resources all located in Montgomery.

Questions Received at the Pre-Bidders Conference

1. Question: How hard over are you on your date as the 16th?
   Answer: The due date will be moved to the 6th of January.

2. Question: You're allowing a prime and sub arrangement here. As part of the response, do we have to list a potential subcontractor; and if we win, is the subcontractor subject to the four-year exclusion?
   Answer: The State must understand who the bidders are and the Bidder must clearly identify all companies that are proposed to offer services in the proposal response. Therefore, if a Bidder proposes a subcontractor(s), the Bidder should identify that subcontractor(s). It is the State's intention that all parties in the proposal (prime contractor and subcontractors) are subject to the four year exclusions. The purpose of the exclusion is to assure that the State achieves independence from its contractors. The State seeks to hire a network engineering contractor who is independent of the equipment and telecommunications services providers around whose equipment and services the network will be designed.

3. Question: Does the State desire a firm fixed price proposal where time and materials are not to exceed the proposal? Which of those does the State prefer?
   Answer: The State expects to award this project to the Bidder that offers the best value to the State. The State anticipates that a contract between the State and the awarded Bidder will be for a fixed price. The State would expect that the amount of the contract would not exceed the amount of the awarded Bidder's proposal.

4. Question: Can the successful bidder engage vendors post award and before data collection and so on and not be prohibited from bidding upon the result -- Engage vendors in a question-and-answer type scenario? So the winner bidder can go talk to Cisco, Nortel, and so on and learn best practices and options, but not have them be prevented from bidding on the follow-up work?
   Answer: Yes

5. Question: Tasks 1 through 8 deal in part with the discovery and documentation of different aspects of the State's telecommunications network. Does the State have documentation standards and a set of tools that will have to be used by the selected consultant?
   Answer: No.

6. Question: How much of the documentation mentioned in those eight tasks is available on electronic format?
   Answer: The majority of it is available.

7. Question: Item 8 in the RFP indicates the State may award multiple contracts. It may be difficult and more expensive for the State to have multiple consultants work on some of the tasks without the benefit of working on others, such as a learning curve, incompatibility in structures, lack of a working relationship, at least initially. How likely is it that the State will decide to break up the project into two or more awards?
   Answer: The State would prefer a single award for the reasons indicated in the question. The State reserves the option of awarding the work to multiple contractors if in the State's opinion that would be in the best interest of the State.

8. Question: How long does the State anticipate the implementation of the converged network to take, just that one piece?
   Answer: A timeline for achieving convergence and implementing the new network design that is anticipated to be the product of this project has not been set. The State hopes to better understand the economic and practical considerations as a result of this project so as to make an informed judgment on the optimal implementation timeline.

9. Question: Will the State set up a PMO office in both the design and implementation phases?
   Answer: Yes.

10. Question: Does the comprehensive view of the current costs include benchmarking analysis that compares the State's costs to those of other state networks?
    Answer: The State does not have that information currently.

11. Question: Will the network utilization baseline include just the WAN or the WAN type, or will LAN utilization be required as well?
    Answer: It will include both.

12. Question: Will the consultant be responsible for topology diagrams for the counties, cities, and others who are using the network?
    Answer: The State desires topology diagrams to the end router port level.

13. Question: Does that go for LANs or just the WANs?
    Answer: Both.

14. Question: Will the discovery of the alternative service providers be limited to the top five who operate within the state?
    Answer: No.

15. Question: Will the draft RFP include video, voice, data, and network managed services?
    Answer: The RFP will include those services. No decision has been made as of this time about managed services

16. Question: Given the widely possible alternative recommendations, will an hourly rate for project management suffice?
    Answer: No. The State is not asking for the ultimate implementation proposal to be included in the response to this RFP.

17. Question: Do the presentations include site visits to other states or other companies?
    Answer: No.

18. Question: Are presentations all in house?
    Answer: Yes.

19. Question: Does this include the super computer network as well, or is this being restricted to the current ISD network?
    Answer: Current ISD network.

20. Question: Could you elaborate a little bit on the wording in the RFP about what the winning bidder would be excluded from in the implementation?
    Answer: The winning Vendor for this RFP will be restricted from participating in providing the network services and equipment, if any, in the follow-up project, the purpose of which will be to implement the redesigned network.

21. Question: The RFP refers to some oversight or advisory role that the winning bidder could still play -- in the implementation? Any more specifics on --
    Answer: The awarded Vendor would not be permitted to bid on network services and equipment, but would be expected to propose and participate in the implementation phase from a project management standpoint.

22. Question: I would assume, then, that you expect some sort of test criteria as part of this proposal if you're going to be managing the implementation in the future? Because I would assume this vendor would be helping the State in order to verify or validate the network once it's implemented
    Answer: Yes.